



# GARY GALYEAN'S GOLF LETTER®

THE INSIDE REPORT ON WORLD GOLF

NUMBER 324

OUR 30<sup>th</sup> YEAR

MARCH 2019

Dear Subscriber:

The 2019 Rules of Golf - the new, modern ones - are producing a predictable level of grumbling from many of us working to understand them. Such a sweeping re-adjustment in procedure and presentation was never expected to be nidifugous (able to leave the nest soon after hatching); especially when the nest is surrounded by petulant, precocious golf professionals who pay little attention to such details as the Rules until their prize money is endangered or their egos bruised.

The comment period for the new Rules began two years ago. Twenty-two thousand responses were received worldwide. However, notable tour players, who soar high above amateur players, only now appear to be getting around to considering the changes proposed in 2017.

During the past ten weeks we have listened to big names complain about how they look when dropping from knee height; that their caddie can no longer line them up before they strike the ball; putting with the flag in the hole; balls at rest moving to new positions; repairing spike marks, backstopping; unenforced slow play penalties, etc. Some of these they actually called for for years; some have been in force for years.

To mirror a thought from MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL: Over-paid professional golfers wearing ridiculous clothing and swatting at golf balls while ignorantly pontificating on the Rules is no basis for establishing or directing a system of governance.

After being involved in more than one ruling earlier in the year that involved dropping his ball, Rickie Fowler (at the Honda Classic), in front of a cameraman and a tour Rules official, pretended to defecate his ball from

knee height in a vulgar attempt to show his objection to the new dropping procedure. At that moment, he should have been removed from the course for "conduct unbecoming a professional golfer", as stipulated in the P.G.A. TOUR PLAYER HANDBOOK AND REGULATIONS [Section VII, C. page 156-7], fined, and forced to apologize. Where there is no punishment for decreasing standards, there will be decreasing standards.

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You can be certain that you will never see Mr. Fowler do such a thing during The Masters Tournament. If he were to do so, you would never see him again on Augusta National property. That is the power of the invitation.

The refining and incorporation of the Rules will be addressed here in future issues. A most poignant question fell recently to The R&A Chief Executive Martin Slumbers. Regarding the 150<sup>th</sup> Open Championship that will be played at St. Andrews in 2021, he was asked, "Do you think the ultimate nightmare would be a six-hour round and somebody putting for a 59 with the flagstick in?" It went unanswered.

## Fontainebleau Redux Miami Beach

*I don't care if it's Baroque or Brooklyn, just get me plenty of glamour and make sure it screams luxury.*

-HARRY MUFSON, Miami Beach developer

Would Auric Goldfinger check into Fontainebleau today? Mr. Goldfinger came to Miami Beach in 1964 to cheat rich, unsuspecting pigeons at gin rummy by the lavish hotel pool. Such obscene panache fits perfectly on the American Riviera. We were compelled to return ten years ago - following the hotel's \$500 million renovation; and re-visited just last month to measure how it presents

its massive array of 1,504 guests rooms, 12 restaurants and bars, and a spa that covers three-quarters of an acre.

“As any journalist can attest,” MIAMI HERALD columnist Carl Hiaasen wrote some years ago in THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW, “just because a place is shallow, corrupt and infested with phonies doesn’t mean it’s dull. In fact, there’s probably not another square mile of American real estate more amusing than South Beach, in small doses and with the proper precautions.”

It is not that there is a shortage of glitzy destinations that showcase questionable manners and extreme fashion. It is, rather, that Fontainebleau is an icon of American architecture. NOTE: The definite article before the hotel’s name is purposefully omitted just as been the custom for the royal château since the 12th century.

Fontainebleau is the progenitor of what we have come to expect and been forced to accept in our pop culture. Within its central, curved 13 storied building, referred to as the Château, America stepped away from the dark, straight hallways of its past and into brightly colored, bizarrely ornamented grand spaces that took leisure time to a spotlight of self indulgence and self promotion that was never before so accessible.

The allure of 1960s glamour and glamourazzi, optimized by Fontainebleau and all that took place there, still sparkles in our memory. We had to return to see if the property’s pace setting sense of style made it through the expansion and the increase in occupancy necessary to pay for all that has been added.

*Fontainebleau is a monument to that everything - to the imported optimism of a generation of dreamers, born with the twentieth century, who shaped the very tone and texture of our lives today. What George Gershwin was to American commercial music, what Billy Wilder was to American commercial cinema, Morris Lapidus was to American commercial architecture.*

-DAVE HICKEY, art critic

The quarter circle crescent, the Château, captured the southeasterly trade-winds turned American commercial architecture upside down. Fontainebleau’s concrete curve was the antithesis of the Seagram Building’s steel frame and glass walled box.

Seagram’s architect, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, became known for the austerity of his art that he summarized with the words “less is more.” Fontainebleau’s architect, Morris Lapidus, said that was foolish. “I thought van der Rohe was an idiot. Less is more. How stupid can you be? Less is not more. Less is nothing.”

Mr. Lapidus’ new approach redirected most of the notable, commercial spaces in malls and large hotels that we take for granted today. It is because of his innovations that curved walls direct you around a department store floor; that indirect lighting and bright color invite you in; and that the clothes are displayed where you can touch them, not behind a counter attended by a clerk or sales person.

“Well, I made curves work,” Mr. Lapidus said. “I even made ‘S’ curves work, which is not easy. I made colors work. I made artificial light, plate glass façades, and ornament work as well. I proved that architecture is still an expressive medium, like music, that can make people happy.”

*I met Morris some years ago and he claimed that he invented me. He may be right.*

-FRANK GEHRY

Morris Lapidus was born in the southern Ukraine in 1902. To escape oppression as Russian Jews, the Lapidus family emigrated to New York when young Morris was still an infant. He grew up on the Lower East Side. The dramatic and amusing appeal of Coney Island made its impression on him as a child.

He attended New York University and joined a theatrical group. After discovering that the life of an actor was not for him (“Sitting around backstage waiting for my cue ‘to enter stage right’”), Mr. Lapidus decided to become a stage designer. In that pursuit, he won a scholarship to the Columbia University School of Architecture and his degree in 1926.

For the next 25 years, Mr. Lapidus developed and perfected a notable and new approach to store design. He innovated plate glass windows and concrete walls, lighting and color that pulled customers into the commercial places. He termed this *The Moth Principle*. Praised for his work in boutiques and department stores, he was vilified by his colleagues and critics when the same innovations were brought to Fontainebleau.

*The first question put to me was, did I know anything about hotels? I told Ben [Novack] that I had stayed at hotels...*

-MORRIS LAPIDUS

The idea for Fontainebleau came to Miami Beach hotel developer, Ben Novack, as he was traveling through France. According to the hotel’s history book, Mr. Novack thought the name was “catchy,” even though he did not venture inside because he did not “go for those foreign châteaux.”

In 1949, Mr. Lapidus and Mr. Novack met to discuss

the interior design of San Souci, a hotel Mr. Novack had under construction in Miami Beach. Mr. Lapidus examined the plans after dinner with Mr. Novack. Ideas were sketched on what notepaper could be found. "I sketched various parts of the hotel that I thought would be made more interesting. Of course, I was using techniques that I had developed in stores," Mr. Lapidus recalled later.

Mr. Novack was smitten and Mr. Lapidus won his first architectural contract. "At last, I was a real architect," he said. "I was still using my free-flowing designs that I had developed in my store designs. I was determined not to design a 'box' as a building."

The permit for Fontainebleau, the largest granted by Miami to date, was issued in December 1953. A year later the hotel opened for business.

*The white marble floor is decorated with black marble bows. This was the only signature that I placed in the hotel. I have worn only bow ties all my adult life.*

-MORRIS LAPIDUS

What Mr. Lapidus created in that year would become the template for future American resorts. Five-hundred rooms were set in a southeastern-facing quarter circle that embraced the prevailing breeze. In Fontainebleau's case, these were breezes that filled the sails of wealthy guests, film stars, and wannabes, and pushed them to the hotel's reception desk.

When they arrived, purple and gold uniformed bellmen escorted guests through the 17,000 square foot lobby, past an alligator filled terrarium, the Stairway to Nowhere, a faux French mural, and across the black and white, bow tie marble floor. So impressive was Fontainebleau as a destination that 60 years later people still recall that guests would sit in the lobby just so they could make the scene.

Mr. Lapidus believed that people went on vacation to indulge their vision of luxury. Fontainebleau was a stage, a movie set where the guests could play whatever role suited their fancy.

Nothing optimized this idea more than the Stairway to Nowhere. Mr. Lapidus understood the need that the glamourazzi had to make an entrance. So he placed the cloak room at the top of a semi-circular stairway at a focal point in the lobby. The only purpose of the stairway was to give guests an excuse to climb the stairs, check their wrap, and then make a grand descent while everyone watched from sofas and armchairs in the wall-less lobby.

There were formal French gardens bordered by palm trees and a sense of arrival that extended from the driveway through the lobby, to the curved hallways of the guest room floors, down the stairways to the pool's high diving board (the opening shot of Fontainebleau in *GOLDFINGER*) and through the archway to the ocean. This was not a quiet enclave for the Fricks and Vanderbilts. Fontainebleau was a garish stage for Elvis, Sinatra, Goldfinger, Gleason, Monroe, and J.F.K.

*Lapidus Land, it might be called. Its elegant curved façade stands, along with Cadillac tailfins, starburst clocks, and boomerang coffee tables, as a monument to the gregarious vernacular of postwar America that is only now receiving the respect it deserves.*

-DAVE HICKEY

Fontainebleau was not only ill received by the academics and critics, it was vilified. "Boarding house baroque," "the epitome of the apogee," "tail-fin chic," "supershloc," "pornography of architecture," and "probably not too disturbing to people who have lost their eyesight" ... all were used to one up the critical piling on.

While Mr. Lapidus referred to it as the most pretentious hotel in the world, others called it the nation's grossest national product. But Hollywood, the glamourazzi and the public could not get enough of Fontainebleau. Jackie Gleason, Frank Sinatra, Joey Bishop, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr. and Red Skelton all performed there. In 1972, both the Republican and Democrat conventions were held there. Guests included Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon, Golda Meir, and Kennedy chum Sam Giancana.

*Miami is a non-place populated by rootless people.*

-ALEX DAUD, former Miami Beach Mayor

In the 1970s and 80s the shine fell away from Miami Beach, crime increased, and Disney took Mr. Lapidus' concepts to Orlando and built family destinations with dancing dogs and mice.

The decline lasted until *MIAMI VICE* made SoBe's [South Beach's] Art Deco once again alluring and fashionable, as Mr. Hiaasen observes, "... even as Sonny and Rico were shooting it out with Armani-clad cokeheads under the palms. With that kind of advertising, it's not surprising how the new Miami Beach turned out, and who showed up."

Roughly 10 years ago real estate developer Jeff Soffer bought Fontainebleau for a reported \$500 million and

## FONTAINEBLEAU

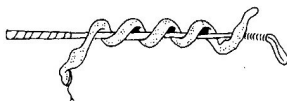
spent that many Dubai investment dollars again to triple the room count to 1,504, and completely renovate the property.

The result is larger in scale, but not as impressive in its glamour. That, however, maybe more a result of the guests' mind-set than the property's amenities. We have still never watched anyone climb the Stairway to Nowhere, but we did see a young child sleeping under a hotel bathrobe on a banquette at Hakkasan (\$150/plate). We did not see anyone hustling gin rummy by the pool, but we heard lots of screaming children, and adults talking on mobile phones.

In 2009, the AFL-CIO Executive Council did oblige us with a whiff of the old days when they met at Fontainebleau. What a flashback to the golden days of big labor and national politics. Joe Biden, the newly-elected vice president of transparency addressed the labor leaders in secret. The press and public were barred from hearing what was said. Now that is tradition you can believe in.

The enlarged Fontainebleau has learned to fill their 1,504 rooms, and entertain and feed their guests but it comes with the diminishment of its once-sought-after glamour and style. It has become more of a money factory, almost mall-like, and less of a private, discerning experience.

Fontainebleau cannot be viewed outside the 60 years of its cultural influence. It is today more an adult and teenage waterpark than an innovative architectural adventure. While there are contemporary elements that still impress, it seems fair to imagine that if Mr. Lapidus could produce a new hotel today he would be stunning us with something even more outrageous, and that is where Mr. Goldfinger would be hustling gin rummy.



For the P.G.A. Tour:

*... what possible stake do grown men [or women] have in the fortunes of... perfect strangers, vagabond mercenaries paid obscene sums to play a game for half the year?*

Charles Krauthammer  
THE POINT OF IT ALL

Most importantly, although the occasional misstep took place, the attitude of the staff could not have been friendlier or more accommodating.

Fontainebleau, 4441 Collins Avenue, Miami Beach, Florida, Tel: 800.548.8886. [www.fountainbleau.com](http://www.fountainbleau.com)

### **Miami Beach Golf Club Also Turnberry and the Biltmore**

While Fontainebleau has made arrangements for their guests to play golf at Turnberry Isle, we recommend the **Miami Beach G.C.** for some of the same reasons that Fontainebleau draws us, and it is just five minutes from the hotel. Miami Beach G.C., 2301 Alton Road, Miami Beach, Florida 33140, Tel: 305.532.3350.

The Donald Ross course at the **Biltmore Hotel** in Coral Gables is interesting. The hotel provides a great contrast to Fontainebleau. Mr. Lapidus said, "My negative example when I started Fontainebleau was the Biltmore in Coral Gables with its dark spaces and off-putting aura of old-time gentility." Biltmore Coral Gables, 1200 Anastasia Avenue, Coral Gables, Florida 33134, Tel: 800-915-1926.

### **Next Month's GOLF LETTER Delivery**

April's issue of THE GOLF LETTER will be delivered to you via e-mail. The address you provided will receive an e-mail from [delivery@TheGolfLetter.com](mailto:delivery@TheGolfLetter.com). When you open that e-mail you will see the first page of the April newsletter in color.

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Yours vly truly,

Gary A. Galyean  
Editor & Publisher

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